

Pretentious Premiere Opens New Dramatic Season Wednesday Night

Significant New Note Is Sounded in Dramatic Art

New Playwright Furnishes Complete Novelty in "On Trial," Employing "Retroactive" Technique of the "Movies" Without Use of a Screen—Izetta Jewel Has Big Plans—Van Buren Sends Message to Washingtonians.

By JULIA CHANDLER MANZ.

Talk of the sensational success of a murder melodrama produced recently in New York City galloped with such speed across and up and down, the continent that the news penetrated the quiet hills of Virginia, where it found me some days ago seeking a temporary oblivion in the matter of things theatrical, and determined me to run up to New York and see for myself what all the noise was about, and to find out what manner of man could have achieved an actual novelty while the new dramatic season was yet in the throes of its birth, with little in the way of success checked up to its credit.

Naturally, the first thing I did upon my arrival in New York was to insure seats at the brand-new Candler Theater, where Cohen & Harris are offering "On Trial," and where lines of people overflow into the street daily in a mad rush for the privilege of cashing in their good coin in payment for three hours of absorbing thrills.

To this crowded theater lobby before each performance of his play comes young Elmer L. Reizenstein. He watches the crowd with an expression of bewilderment, still dazed over the force with which he has "arrived." Diffident, modest, he talks to no one and seldom is any one seen talking to him. And when the long line at the box office has run out the playwright slips into the theater like a frightened rabbit, and watches "On Trial" make the vast audience lean forward and grip the seats in front, while the big human notes which throb through the story and the power with which it is unfolded hold tense the heart strings of "the house."

It isn't often that a professional reviewer, who is inevitably surfeited with the drama, forgets the purpose of analytical criticism for which he or she is in the playhouse, becoming absorbed in the story that is told and the manner in which it is presented to an extent that the matter of reviewing is forgotten, but I confess to just such a thing as I watched the story which Mr. Reizenstein has told backward (with absolute disregard for chronology) uniquely and flawlessly presented.

The play deals with circumstantial evidence. A husband is on trial for his life. A juror has just been sworn and the district attorney is stating the case. The defendant's lawyer follows, and the first witness is called. The wife of the murdered man takes the stand and begins telling of a telephone call that immediately preceded the murder of her husband.

"The telephone bell rang," she says. Whereupon the lights go out with startling suddenness. In the stillness you hear a telephone bell ringing, and before you have scarcely had time to say Jack Robinson up flash the lights and you sit blinking at the completely furnished library of a wealthy home, bewildered in your mind as to how on earth it ever got there, for the stage hands have made no noise, and scarcely sixty seconds have elapsed since the scene was that of the court room and the witness on the stand was saying "The telephone bell rang."

The remainder of her testimony is enacted before your eyes. The same method is pursued throughout the three acts of the play, with its multitudinous scenes which appear noiselessly, as occasion demands, and quite as if by magic. And always you come back to the court room where the defendant quivers in acute suffering; where his little daughter is examined, and where his wife tells her agonized tale.

In three sessions of the trial, and at three vital moments in the unfolding of the story, the audience, as well as the jury, is carried back to see the happenings given in testimony enacted by living people. No scenes are used, Mr. Reizenstein having employed only the technique of the photo-drama, making it veritable flesh and blood.

So great has been the interest in the (hitherto unknown) performance (which still is in his twenties), in the unique character of this first drama, and in the cleverness with which Cohen & Harris (the arrangement with Arthur Hopkins) have staged it, that a discussion of the play-folk engaged in the production seldom entered the comment I heard during my stay in New York.

But when the surprise of the play and its author has worn off, layman and critic alike will awaken to the full significance of the flawless acting engaged in telling the story, particularly in the matter of the emotional depths sounded by Frederick Perry in the role of the defendant; Frederick Truesdell's sincere delineation of the character of the murdered man, who comes to life three or four different times as the story moves backward in time, and in the poignant pathos with which Mary Ryan, as the wife of the defendant, saturates her part.

Little Constance Wolfe gives a natural and appealing performance as the daughter of the man who is "On Trial," and Helen Lackaye, sister of Wilton Lackaye, is excellent in the role of the dead man's wife.

The "retroactive" moving picture plot which furnishes the novelty of Mr. Reizenstein's sensational melodrama begins the new season in New York with a significant note, and one which less original playwrights will attempt to imitate before many moons, unless I very much miss my guess.

I also saw Frank Craven's "Too Many Cooks," William A. Brady's production at the Thirty-ninth Street Theater, and was but mildly amused. Perhaps the long run of the piece, and the glowing accounts which have from time to time reached me of the genuineness of its humor, led me into too high an expectation, for I found the sprinkling of clever lines too few and far between to justify my preconceived favorable idea of the comedy.

The central theme—which is the disastrous results which are sure to accrue from too much meddling on the part of outsiders when an engaged man elects to build a home for his bride-to-be—is adhered to with unwavering faithfulness by Mr. Craven, furnishing a situation which gives promise of an hilarious three hours of comedy, which promise is but half fulfilled.

One has often to go away from home to learn what is happening there. So it was that I found out in New York the real truth concerning Izetta Jewel's "vacation" plans, which an esteemed contemporary told us last Sunday meant a three months' leave from the Poll Company, the inference being that she would return to Washington as leading woman at the Pennsylvania avenue home of stock at the end of that period.

In the first place, it simply isn't in Miss Jewel to rest for three solid months, no matter what her need may be. She is just a bundle of ambitious head to foot, and some of them are staggering in point of their enormity. Certainly they point to a definite and final termination of her connection with stock.

Yes, sirree, Miss Jewel is leaving the

The Current Week.

National, Wednesday—"The Dragon's Claw."

The inauguration of the 1914-15 season and the premier of an elaborate production bring to the National Theater Wednesday night one of the most distinguished groups of the theatrical aristocracy, not only behind the footlights but before them. With the members of the all-powerful firm of Klaw & Erlanger and their entire staff, Henry Miller and his force of experts occupying seats in the audience, "The Dragon's Claw," by Austin Strong, is to be given its first production on any stage with an exceptionally strong company. Owing to the inability of the stage director to whip the enormous number of "supers" and minor characters into shape the opening scheduled for Monday night was postponed. The play is in three acts and has to do with the uprising of the Chinese Boxers in 1900. Mr. Strong has several successes to his credit, including "The Toyman of Humberburg" and "The Little Father of the Wilderness."

"The Dragon's Claw" is the most extensive production by Klaw & Erlanger and Henry Miller. The company numbers nearly 125 persons, there being thirty-three actors in the cast, a large life and drum corps, a choir of mixed voices, and Chinese and Japanese supernumeraries. The scene of act 1 is the garden of a palatial home in the legation quarter of Peking, China, while acts 2 and 3 take place in the courtyard of a British legation. In the second act is shown the attack which the frenzied Boxers made on the legation and the repulse by the allies, headed by the Amer-

prominent in national life was given in Washington, D. C., on a Sunday afternoon, April 4, 1913, at the National Theater. The result of the reception of the play all over the country later is responsible for the decision on the part of Mr. Bennett to offer it in every city in America as a photodrama.

R. F. Keith's—High-class Vaudeville.

R. F. Keith's vaudeville bill this week will include attractions ranging from musical comedy to comedy drama, with John C. Peabody offering "Sergeant Bagby," a comedy sketch made from the story of the same name written by Irvin S. Cobb and published in the Saturday Evening Post. It was dramatized by Mr. Cobb and Roseman Buiger, and Tom Barry and Homer Miles staged it. The company includes Mildred Quigg, Leo P. Hardman, Charles Kennedy, Neil Burton, Joseph Knapman, Frank Dee, and Stuart Johnson. The story is of the South and blends chivalry, love, romance and laughter. Next in rank is Ray Samuels, who was featured in "The Homestead Express" and "The Winsome Widow" and the "Polies." It will be her first appearance here in vaudeville. Another new offering here will be the "Great Leon," and his troupe of mystifiers from Simla, India. Ben Ryan and Harriette Lee, with a new version of

second victim is shown as a brandy-soaked wreck, disgraced in the eyes of society, separated from his family, and shunned by his friends. The final episode of the play depicts the return of the "vampire" to gloat over the wreck she has created. The man dies in an attempt to strangle her, leaving her triumphant over the body of another "fool."

The central role of the play, that of the misguided husband, will be entrusted to Carl Brickert. It is the role that was created in the original production by Robert Hilliard, and it established him as a star.

Gaiety—"Ben Welch and His New Show."

"Ben Welch and His New Show" will appear at the Gaiety this week. Ben Welch has to assist him a company of versatile comedians and an efficient chorus of girls. The book is in two separate acts, the first, "The Love Water," a musical farce, and the second act, "Frisco, 1915," a satire on the exposition. They are both from the pen of Abe Leavitt, and have been expressly written for Mr. Welch. Many novel and new scenic and electrical effects will be shown, including the "Flying Stars," requiring over 600 lights.

In the cast, besides Mr. Welch, will be found Florence Rother, Miss "Budd" Harrison, Fred Florence, Mabel Howard, Pat Kearney, Frank P. Murphy, Vic Casmore, and the twenty American Zouaves, in "Off to Mexico." The music is of the whistling kind, the songs being staged by James Gorman, general stage manager for the Cohan

tear night Friday, with special concerts every Sunday, including today, from 3 to 10:30 p. m.

Glen Echo Park.

Beginning with the Labor Day celebration tomorrow, there will be something doing all the time at Glen Echo Park, and "farewell week" promises to be the banner week of the year.

Amusement that covers a wide range has been provided for those who choose Glen Echo as the place at which to spend the holiday. While a number of special features will mark the day, the big attraction will be the reappearance of Marie Thelin in the startling diving act that gave a thrill to so many during her former engagement at the park. Not only on Labor Day, but all during the week Miss Thelin will be the drawing card. In the afternoon she will give her exhibition of high and fancy diving, and at 9 in the evening she will be seen in her fire dive.

This afternoon and tonight visitors at Glen Echo will have their last opportunity of the summer to hear the concerts by the Charles O. Mills' Orchestra, and tonight, as usual, the free moving pictures will be on the bill.

Strand—Feature Films.

Washingtonians will be given a final opportunity to witness Gabrielle d'Anjou's "Cabrera" today at Moore's Strand Theater. This spectacle closes a record run of two weeks at this house. On Monday the featured attraction for the week will be Edward Peple's war drama, "The Littlest Rebel." This attraction comes direct from the Strand Theater, New York. It was in this play

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